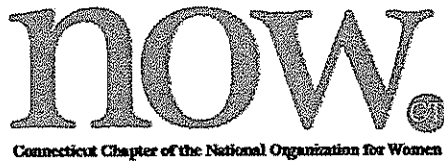


OFFICERS

Jessica Fenner, *Co-President*
Michelle Noehren, *Co-President*
Meghan Forgione, *Action Vice President*
Joan Chrisler, *Treasurer*
Mary Grace Peak, *Membership Coordinator*



BOARD MEMBERS

Christa Allard
Elizabeth Cafarella
Laura Bachman
Donna Stimpson
Sarah Uhl

CHAPTER REPRESENTATIVES

Marguerite Boslough
Irene Senter

Written Testimony of Jessica Fenner For PCSW's Women's Day 2/9/2010

As co-president of the Connecticut Chapter of the National Organization of Women (NOW) I am blessed to have the opportunity to work with a board made up of amazing women; all of whom devote a portion of their time and spirit to women's causes in an effort to better the lives of other women around the state. As a NOW board we are very grateful to have the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) working beside us on almost every issue we define as important to lives of women throughout Connecticut.

PCSW is a wonderful member of this State's legislative branch, one that is truly unique because it is defined by a specific goal: to work on behalf of women. To many skeptics, this goal may be deemed as unnecessary, however, without PCSW women would not have a voice. PCSW is one of the only organizations that promotes an agenda unique to the needs of women and the Commission is responsible for helping to pass legislation has helped our community's grandmothers, mothers, sisters and future daughters.

One of CT NOW's mantra's is to "empower Connecticut's Women to address all aspects of their lives, the personal, political, and professional". Without the political presences and wonderful education opportunities that PCSW provides women of the state, our organization would be left to try to achieve this mantra alone. The PCSW is a guiding light to the young feminists in this State, it is a Commission that reminds how us how unique we are, and how productive we can be when our opinions are voiced.

CT NOW is proud of PCSW for hosting Women's Day at the Capitol and we are thrilled to have such wonderful feminine representation at the State Legislature.

**Testimony of Jillian Gilchrest
Before the Appropriations Committee
In Support of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
Thursday, February 18, 2010**

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Jillian Gilchrest and I am co-chair to the Young Women's Leadership Program, a project of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women.

The Young Women's Leadership Program (YWLP) was established in 2006 and is lead by a group of young women representing a wide variety of career fields and areas of expertise. Focusing on ages 18-35, the mission of the YWLP is to promote awareness and inspire and empower young women to emerge as leaders. I am here in opposition of the Governor's proposed elimination of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW).

I was asked to join the YWLP at its inception while employed at the Connecticut General Assembly as a Legislative Aide and Committee Clerk for this very committee. To be asked to join the YWLP, a project of the PCSW, was a tremendous honor for me. As an undergraduate at the University of Connecticut I had attended PCSW events that encouraged female participation in government, and had looked up to an institution with such a long history of promoting women's equality.

My experiences with the PCSW, as a member of the Young Women's Leadership Program have been invaluable to me and my development as a leader. Our program has over 320 members and has accomplished quite a bit during our nearly four years in existence. We have conducted body image workshops at college campuses throughout Connecticut, legislative advocacy trainings to students and young professionals, have held networking events and have plans to offer trainings on career development, financial planning, and home ownership.

The PCSW Young Women's Leadership Program provides Connecticut's young women with a network within which to develop themselves and their careers. Many of our members struggle to find a network once they have graduated or moved into the work force. The PCSW's Young Women's Leadership Program encourages young women to develop as leaders in Connecticut, whether that is in their family life, professional life, or public life. In addition to our leadership development and networking programs, the YWLP is the voice of young women at the legislature. Too often, the voices of young women, ages 18-35 are left out of policy decisions and debates. The YWLP has testified on more than 75 pieces of legislation, providing a unique perspective on such things as bullying, the solicitation of credit cards, affordable housing, and reproductive health. We engage with our members about the legislative process and incorporate their opinions in the development of our legislative priorities.

For me personally, being a steering committee member of the Young Women's Leadership Program has had a direct impact on my life. When I joined the YWLP, I had aspirations of being a leader on women's issues in the state, but didn't quite have the leadership skills to make that vision a reality. Since joining the YWLP, I have become a board member of the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence, a trustee of the National Association of Social Work Connecticut Chapter Political Action Committee, and the Executive Director of NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut, a statewide non-profit organization.

I understand that our state and our country are facing harsh economic times and some cuts are necessary, but to eliminate the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women would be a grave loss to this state. Over their 36 year history, the PCSW has been a leader on women's equality in this state and nationally, but the work isn't over.

The young women I know are still struggling with how to balance work and family, how to negotiate a salary that is comparable to their male counterpart, and how to protect themselves against sexual violence and discrimination. We need female leaders in this state to represent us and our concerns. Please do not eliminate the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women and the Young Women's Leadership Program.

Thank you.

Dear Committee Members:

The staff and Board of The Center for Women and Families of Eastern Fairfield County, Inc. enthusiastically assert its support for The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women in their tireless efforts on behalf of the women of Connecticut.

The Center for Women and Families is "dedicated to strengthening women and families and to eliminating violence and abuse through education, intervention, advocacy, and community collaboration."

The work of the PCSW towards empowering young women to seek leadership roles in their communities, establishing and sustaining healthy body images, furthering legislative issue affecting the health and well being of women in our state, and educating businesses on the prevention and identification of sexual harassment speak directly to our mission and our goal of creating communities where all citizens have the opportunity to thrive.

The PCSW's legislative work in training leaders about the nature and scope of discrimination, serving as a liaison between government and private interest groups concerned with services for women, promoting consideration of women for governmental positions, and working with state agencies to access programs and practices as they affect women has been an invaluable service to both CWF and our community.

In January 2008, The Center hosted its first Legislative Breakfast with attendees including Teresa Younger, Executive Director of PCSW, Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, and representatives from Christopher Shays' Office and from First Selectman, Mayor and superintendent offices for all six towns in our service community. The purpose of this event was to educate our public officials about the devastating effects of sexual and domestic violence on our communities and to enhance our partnerships with policy makers.

One of the highlights of this event was the closing speech delivered by Ms. Younger, which not only exemplified her and PCSW's understanding of women's needs in CT, it confirmed that all facets of the community working collaboratively is paramount to ensure social justice for women and girls.

In the dismal economic times that we now face, the State of Connecticut cannot afford to lose a commission dedicated to supporting vulnerable and underserved populations in our state. As such, we urge you to reconsider your decision and